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*Comprehension of Past  
Changes for Present  
Choice for Future*

Remarks prepared for delivery by  
Mrs. Frances D. Hooks in observance  
of Black History Month. 8 Feb., 84

## I. Appropriate Greetings

## II. Why Black History Month?

The question might be asked why is it important to observe Black History Month. Some reasons why it might be important are:

- a.) For an appreciation of the past that will enable us to better understand the role and effect of color distinctions in our country, even 100 years after slavery.
- b.) To end the myth that Americans of African ancestry have made no contribution to the development of the country and to a unique American culture.
- c.) To be able to intelligently plan for the future and work for a society free of color distinctions and committed to genuine equality of opportunity. The study and understanding of what has happened in the past will permit us to avoid repeating past mistakes. Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeating it!

## III. The Significance of Black History

What is significant about Black History is not so much the individual achievements of blacks. While it is nice to know that some person of African ancestry invented this or that or achieved this or that position, the real significance of Black History is in the impact the race has had on the totality of American life. For example, the agitation against slavery that finally led to the enactment of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution benefitted blacks and all others in the society. Likewise the N.A.A.C.P.'s successful efforts to change the public policy of the American government on racial segregation has not only provided blacks with significant constitutional protection of their rights but any other aggrieved group as well.

### III. Con't

It is also significant to appreciate the social and cultural impact Black political agitation has had on the country. The mass movements of the 1960's with their street demonstrations brought a new political action into vogue. The "Black Rights" movement spawned the women's rights, Indian rights, and all the other "rights" movements. The tactics of the civil rights movement of the Sixties also influenced the tactics of the peace movement during the fight against American involvement in Vietnam.

Finally, for those of us of African ancestry, as well as those of us who believe in justice and equality, the struggle against racism is not over. We still have chapters to write in the history of African people in the western hemisphere struggling to achieve a secure place in a society where we are in a minority.

### IV. What is to be gained from the study of Black History?

1.) An appreciation of the tremendous sacrifices that were made by black people before us so that we might enjoy some of the fruits of American citizenship. There could be no Jesse Jackson campaign for president had there been no fight by the N.A.A.C.P. and others to secure the right to vote. Men and women in America, not very long ago, were murdered for the simple demand of the right to the ballot. WE MUST REMEMBER!

2.) A lot of young Blacks believe that they got their opportunity for a college education - or some corporate position - because they were "qualified". They seem to think that their professional success was simply personal. The truth is that it is more than personal. They were, and are not, the first Blacks who were "qualified". They got into college, just as you got into college, and they got their corporate position because